How to / Trackmania / General / Graphic formats

Author : The Doctor (Translations: Lord M'zn)

LAST PAGE PAGE 1 2 3 4 NEXT PAGE

Section 6: Software support for DDS

Due to the rather complicated structure of DDS files, you will need some software support to be able to work with them in a proper manner.

Not all graphic editing softwares offer -full- support of DDS (if they do at all), so you're well advised to get these tools for best possible work results...

NVidia Windows Texture Viewer **(Freeware)**
A tiny but informative program to view DDS texture files. It will tell you the pixel dimensions, the DXT compression and if mipmaps are used.
NVidia Legacy DDS Utilities™ **(Freeware) *outdated***
Includes NVDXT.exe, a very powerful and extensive command line tool to create different .dds files. It is replaced by the newer...
NVidia Texture Tools 2™ **(Freeware)**
Includes NVCOMPRESS.EXE, a new and simple replacement for NVDXT.EXE. It's recommended to use this is you work with the command line interface.
NVidia plugin for Adobe Photoshop™ **(Freeware)**
This plugin basically represents all functions of the Nvidia texture tools as a plugin for Adobe Photoshop (if you're so lucky to own a copy of that expensive piece of sh*..telephone.
DDS Converter 2.1 **(Freeware)** Bluehair's superb GUI for Nvidia's nvdxt command line client (included). Offers most important options for everyday .dds compression.

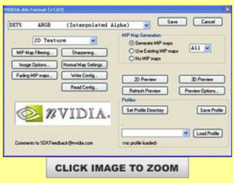
Reading DDS files

Although many graphic editing programs have plugins (or genuine support) for DDS files, most of them will not show you some important piece of information:

If you intend to replace a default texture with one you made, you should save the new dds file with the same settings as the old one. A good tool to get this important information are either the "NVidia Windows Texture Viewer", or "XnView". Both can show you the properties of the viewed DDS file.
These will show you the x/y dimensions of the texture, the **compression format** and if **mipmaps** are used or not...

Saving DDS with NVidia Plugin in Photoshop™

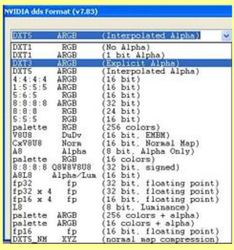
Let's look at the Nvidia DDS Plugin you installed for Photoshop™. When saving in DDS format you get this dialog box.



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

You can see how versatile DDS files are.
For the tutorial I'll just go into the main options, which are important for Trackmania. Luckily these are only a few...

First choose the type of Texture, either 2D or Cubemap.
As we know, there is only 1 type of Cubemap within Trackmania, so for all other textures, chose 2D.

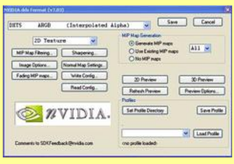


Now choose the compression format:

For most textures, Trackmania uses
DXT1 (with/without alpha/transparency)
DXT3 (with alpha/transparency channel)
DXT5 (with alpha/transparency channel)

Chose the same compression as the original file was compressed with...

(There are very few occasions when you have to use either 8:8:8:8 ARGB for two dimensional textures or DXT5_NM for "normal maps"...)



In the main menu, activate the "Generate MIP maps" option....

That's pretty much it, now you can save your .dds texture and test, if Trackmania accepts it and if it looks good.

Saving DDS with DDS Converter 2.1

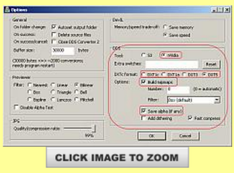
If your graphic program doesn't support saving DDS files with the necessary options, you might want to use the "DDS Converter"..

First of all, in your graphic program, save your picture as TGA or PNG file to your harddisk. Both of these formats use high quality picture quality and can store alpha/transparency information. This will be a good basis for further encoding with the DDS Converter.

CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

You can browse your harddisk for picture files you want to convert to DDS files.

In the screen you can see the "avatar.tga" file chosen and the DDS Converter shows some data in the upper right corner, such as x/y pixels and if the picture contains an alpha/transparency channel...



CLICK IMAGE TO ZOOM

The important options are in the red circles.
As you can see, this is a very simplified version of the dialogue in Adobe Photoshop (basically this tool uses the same encoding mechanism as the Adobe plugin).

Sidenotes
DXT1C = no alpha channel
DXT1A = alpha channel
NEVER use "Fast compress"=Bad quality

All the explanations for the different settings from the Adobe plugin dialogue are valid for this dialogue as well, except that this dialogue actually offers much less options.. but that's ok, it's still enough for 99,9% of all textures you would ever make for Trackmania.
If you changed your settings, press "OK" and then "Convert" in the main menu, that's it...

Saving DDS with "NVidia Texture Tools 2" or "NVidia DDS Legacy"

However, as a last resort or for purism, you can still use the command line clients from these 2 packages...

The "old" one, the NVDXT.EXE from the legacy package offers ALL options there are for storing DDS files, providing 100% control over the output. A horribly(!) complicated tool.

The "new" one, the NVCOMPRESS.EXE has much less options and can be well used with applications which support command line client integration (like e.g. Total Commander buttons)... a neat way for batch converting lots of files at a time...

Needless to say, these methods are powerful and give you more control over the output than the rather simple GUIs, but on the other side it takes lots of time and is actually not required to get good results within Trackmania....

LAST PAGE PAGE 1 2 3 4 NEXT PAGE

This site is friendly to stationary (PC/MAC) and mobile (Android/IOS) browsers
Trackmania, Shootmania, Questmania games & media © Nadeo & UbiSoft used under fair use policy
8,373,014 page views since January 2008. All tutorials, services, coding © Mania Creative 2008-2013